

2: Traveller's Tales

Introduction

Although few people had travelled or explored before **1400**, we have learnt that some people like **Marco Polo** did go out and explore before this date. On the first page of this booklet, we were told how Marco Polo's stories and tales of his journeys were extremely popular in **Italy** and around the **rest of the world**.

Source A: is given by Marco Polo after he visited a place in China called Tenduc, around 1275.



"Tenduc is part of the Chinese Empire, although there is a local king. The King and his people are Christians.

The area produces precious stones and good quality camel hair. Most of the local people are farmers, although there are some craftsmen and traders.

There are many towns and cities close to Tenduc. Travellers heading eastwards towards Cathay from Tenduc come across many weavers and traders who make and sell gold, silver and woollen cloths."

Before great discoverers sailed on their journeys exploring new parts of the world, they **listened** to everything that **other travellers** could tell them. Often these tales were **frightening**. Often these tales were **untrue**. But at the time, the traveller who witnessed the event did not really know what he was witnessing.

Source B: On his way home to Italy, Marco Polo was told about a bird called a gryphon that lived in Madagascar.



"The actual eyewitnesses report how they fly down, pick up an elephant and take it into the sky.

The gryphon then lets the elephant go. It smashes into pulp and the gryphon eats the pieces."

Source C: *Here are some of the tales that were brought back to Europe by earlier travellers.*

- A. Far away there is a great sea of gravel and sand. It has not a drop of water in it, but it has great waves.*
- B. There is a place where people get burned black by the sun.*
- C. There is a race of small hairy men who live in the trees.*
- D. The sea is full of great sea monsters which blow water at you.*
- E. There were giant men who had faces in their chests.*
- F. There is a hill from which flows a river of precious jewels.*
- G. If you sail too far, you will sail off the edge of the edge of the world.*
- H. You will reach a place where the sea is all covered in white crystals.*

Task 1

1. Why were people so keen to read the stories of Marco Polo's adventures?
2. According to Source A, what religion were the people of Tenduc?
3. What valuable goods does Marco Polo talk about in Source A?
4. Why is Source A a valuable source for the historian?
5. Why do you think 'great discoverers' listened to travellers' tales before going out on their voyages?
6. Do you think Source B is likely to be accurate? Explain your answer.
7. Look at Source C. Write down each tale, and beside each one state what you think it is really describing.
8. Using Source C, list the tales you think are completely made up
9. Are the people who are telling these tales completely lying? Explain your answer.
10. Make up your own tale. It can be based on facts or completely made up.